

SECOND EDITION

Noah Webster

JEAN L. McKECHNIE

ILLUSTRATED THROUGHOUT



**SIMON
AND
SCHUSTER**

possessival

1. explicitly laid down; express; direct; explicit; precise; specific; as, he told us in *positive* words; we have his *positive* declaration to the fact.
2. independent of changes, circumstances, opinion, or taste; inherent; absolute; arbitrary; unqualified: distinguished from *comparative*, *relative*; as, beauty is not a *positive* thing, but depends on the different tastes of people.
3. absolute; real; existing in fact or by the presence of something and not by its absence: opposed to *negative*; as, *positive* good.
4. beyond all doubt, qualification, or denial; undeniable; sure; incontestable; express: opposed to *circumstantial*; as, *positive* proof.
5. confident; fully assured; firmly convinced; decided; as, the witness is very *positive* that he is correct.
6. dogmatic; overconfident in opinion or assertion.
- Some *positive* persisting fops we know,
That, if once wrong, will needs be always so. —Pope.
7. settled by or dependent on arbitrary appointment; conventional; artificial: opposed to *natural*.
- Although no laws but *positive* are mutable, yet all are not mutable which are *positive*. —Hooker.
8. showing resolution or agreement; affirmative; certain; as, a *positive* answer.
9. tending in the direction regarded as that of increase, progress, etc.; as, clockwise motion is *positive*.
10. making a definite contribution; constructive; as, *positive* criticism.
11. concerned only with real things and experience; empirical; practical: distinguished from *speculative*, *theoretical*.
12. complete; downright; out-and-out; as, a *positive* devil. [Colloq.]
13. in bacteriology, showing the presence of a specific disease, condition, etc.
14. in biology, directed toward the source of a stimulus; as, *positive* tropism.
15. in electricity, (a) designating or of the kind of electricity generated on a glass rod when it is rubbed with a piece of silk; (b) of, generating, or charged with positive electricity. Opposed to *negative*.
16. in grammar, (a) of an adjective or adverb in its simple, uncompounded form or degree; (b) of this degree. Distinguished from *comparative*, *superlative*.
17. in mathematics, greater than zero; plus.
18. in photography, with the lights and shades corresponding to those of the subject: opposed to *negative*.
- positive crystal*, in optics, a double-refracting crystal in which the index of refraction of the extraordinary ray is greater than that of the ordinary ray.
- positive electricity*, (a) electricity generated on a glass rod when it is rubbed with silk; (b) electricity appearing at the pole of the plate having the higher potential in a voltaic cell.
- positive eyepiece*; see under *eyepiece*.
- positive law*; same as *municipal law* under *law*.
- positive philosophy*; same as *positivism*, sense 3.
- positive*, *n.* something positive, as a degree, quality, quantity, battery terminal, photographic print, etc.
- positive-ly*, *adv.* 1. in a positive manner, as opposed to a negative manner.
2. certainly; assuredly; indubitably; explicitly; peremptorily.
- positive-ness*, *n.* the quality or state of being positive.
- positiv-ism*, *n.* [Fr. *positivisme*.]
1. the quality or state of being positive; certainty; assurance.
2. dogmatism.
3. a system of philosophy that is based solely on the positive data of sense experience; empiricism; especially, [also P-] a system of philosophy, originated by Auguste Comte, which is based solely on positive, observable, scientific facts and their relations to each other and to natural law: it rejects speculation on or search for ultimate origins.
- positiv-lat*, *n.* a believer in or advocate of positivism.
- positiv-lat*, *a.* same as *positivistic*.
- positiv-lat-ic*, *a.* of or characteristic of positivism or positivists.
- positiv-ity*, *n.* the quality of being positive.
- positron*, *n.* [positive and electron.] the positive counterpart of an electron, having approximately the same mass and magnitude of charge.
- pos't-ture*, *n.* posture. [Obs.]
- pos'net*, *n.* [W. *posned*.] a little basin; a porringer, skillet, or saucepan. [Archaic or Dial.]
- pos-o-log'ic*, *pos-o-log'ic-al*, *a.* pertaining to posology.
- pos-sol'o-gy*, *n.* [Gr. *posos*, how much, and *-logy*.] in medicine, the science of doses; the art of making doses.
- pos-pol'i-te*, *n.* [Pol. *pospolite ruszenie*, a general call to arms against the enemy.] a kind of militia in Poland, which, in case of invasion, was summoned to arms for the defense of the country. [Obs.]
- poss*, *v.t.* possessed, *pt.* *pp.* possessing, *ppr.* [form of *push*.] to dash; to push; to thrust. [Obs.]
- pos'se*, *n.* [L., to be able.]
1. (a) the body of men liable to be summoned by a sheriff to assist him in keeping the peace, etc.; (b) a band of men, usually armed, so summoned: in full, *posse comitatus*.
2. any body of men armed with legal authority.
in *posse*; in the range of possibility, but not accomplished; potentially: opposed to *in esse*, in actual being.
posse comitatus; same as *posse*, sense 1.
- pos-sess'*, *v.t.* possessed, *pt.* *pp.* possessing, *ppr.* [OFr. *possessier*, from L. *possessus*, pp. of *possidere*, to possess; *port*, toward (conjectural), and *sedere*, to sit.]
1. to occupy in person; to have as occupant; to inhabit. [Obs.]
O, I have bought the mansion of a love,
But not possess'd it. —Shak.
2. to have as a piece of property or as a personal belonging; to be owner of; to own; as, to *possess* much money and property; also, to have as an attribute, quality, etc.; as, to *possess* many good qualities.
Share all that he doth *possess*. —Shak.
3. to become or make oneself master of; to seize; to gain; to win. [Archaic.]
The English marched toward the river
Eske, intending to *possess* a hill called
Under-Eske. —Hayward.
4. to gain strong influence or control over; to dominate.
Sin of self-love *possesseth* all mine eye. —Shak.
5. to cause to be possessed, as by an evil influence, violent passion, etc. [Archaic.]
6. to put in possession of; to cause to have; to make master or owner: with *of* before the thing, and now generally used in the passive or with reflexive pronouns; as, to be *possessed* of a large fortune; to *possess* oneself of another's property.
Had *possessed* himself of the kingdom. —Shak.
7. to make acquainted with; to acquaint; to inform. [Archaic.]
Possess the people in Messina here how
innocent she died. —Shak.
8. to keep control over; to maintain.
9. to furnish or fill; to imbue or instill into: with *with* before the thing. [Archaic.]
It is of unspeakable advantage to *possess*
our minds with an habitual good intention. —Addison.
10. to have knowledge or mastery of (a language, etc.).
11. to have sexual intercourse with.
Syn.—have, hold, occupy, own.
- pos-sessed'* (-zest'), *a.* 1. owned.
2. controlled by an evil spirit; crazed; mad.
possessed of; in possession of.
- pos-ses'sion* (-zesh'un), *n.* [ME.; OFr.; L. *possessio*.]
1. a possessing or being possessed; ownership, occupancy, hold, etc.
2. anything possessed.
3. [pl.] property; wealth.
4. any territory belonging to an outside country.
5. self-possession.
to *put in possession*; (a) to give possession to; (b) to place a person in charge of property recovered on ejectment or distraint.
- pos-ses'sion*, *v.t.* to provide with property. [Obs.]
- pos-ses'sion-ary*, *a.* relating to or implying possession.
- pos-ses'sion-er*, *n.* 1. one that has possession of a thing, or power over it. [Obs.]
2. a member of such religious communities as were endowed with lands, etc.: opprobrious term. The mendicant orders professed to live entirely upon alms. [Obs.]
- pos-ses-si-val*, *a.* in grammar, of or relating

seiche (sāsh), *n.* [from Swiss Fr.] a movement back and forth of the water in a lake or other land-locked body of water, varying in duration and resulting in fluctuation of the water level.

se'id, *n.* same as *said*.

se'idel (zi'd'l or si'd'l), *n.*; *pl.* **se'idel**, [G.] [often S-] a large beer mug, sometimes with a hinged lid.

Seld/litz (sed'l), *a.* relating to the village of Seidlitz in Czechoslovakia, site of a famous mineral spring; also written *Sedlitz*.

Seld/litz pow'ders, [so called (1815) because their properties are said to resemble those of natural waters from the spring at *Seidlitz*, Czechoslovakia.] a laxative composed of two Rochelle salt, the other of tartaric acid; the two are separately dissolved in water, combined, and drunk while effervescing; also *Seidlitz powder*.

se'gnēur (sān'yēr), *n.* [Fr.; *L. senior*; see *senior*.] a feudal lord or noble; a seignior.

se'gnēu'ri-āl (sān-yū'), *a.* same as *seigniorial*.

se'gnior (sēn'yēr), *n.* [ME. *seignour*; OFr. *seigneur*, a lord, sir, seignior; from *L. senior*, elder, an elder or lord, from *senex*, old.]

1. originally, the lord of a fee or manor.
2. a lord; noble; gentleman.
3. a title of respect corresponding to *Sir*.

se'gnior-āge, *n.* 1. something claimed or taken by a sovereign or other superior as his just right or due.

2. any profits or charges arising from the minting of gold and silver coins from bullion, usually the difference between face value and intrinsic value.

se'gnior-āl, *a.* seigniorial.

se'gnior-āl-ty, *n.* the domain or territory over which a seignior, or feudal lord, has jurisdiction.

se'gnior-āl (sēn-yōr'), *a.* same as *seigniorial*.

se'gnior-y (sēn'yēr-), *n.*; *pl.* **se'gnior-ies**, [OFr. *seignorie*, from *L. senior*, an elder or lord.]

1. the dominion, rights, or authority of a seignior, or feudal lord; lordship.
2. the extent or territory covered by this.
3. a body of lords, especially those of a medieval Italian republic.

Also spelled *signory*.

se'gnō-ri-āl (sēn-yō'), *a.* of or having to do with a seignior.

se'ine (sān), *n.* [Fr. *seine*, from *L. sagena*, Gr. *sagēnē*, a seine.] a large net for catching fish, buoyed along the top by corks and weighted along the bottom so as to float perpendicularly.

se'ine, *v.i.*; *seined*, *pt.*, *pp.*; *seining*, *ppr.* to use a seine in fishing.

se'ine, *v.t.* to catch with a seine; to use a seine in; as, to *seine* fish; to *seine* a stream.

se'iner, *n.* one who or that which seines.

se'in-tū-ār-y, *n.* a sanctuary. [Obs.]

se'ir-fish, *n.* same as *seerfish*.

se'irō-spōre, *n.* [Gr. *seira*, a band, and *spora*, a spore.] in botany, a nonsexual organ of reproduction, several of which are arranged in the form of a chain in certain algae. [Obs.]

se'ize, *v.t.*; *seized*, *pt.*, *pp.*; *seizing*, *ppr.* [var. of *seize*.] in law, to take possession of; to possess; to seize.

se'izin, *n.* same as *seizin*.

se'iz-māl, *a.* same as *seismic*.

se'iz-mic, *a.* [Gr. *seismos*, an earthquake, from *seiein*, to shake.]

1. of or having to do with an earthquake or earthquakes.
2. caused by an earthquake.
3. subject to earthquakes.

seismic vertical; the point upon the earth's surface vertically over the center of effort, or focal point, whence the earthquake's impulse proceeds, or the vertical line connecting these two points.

the seismic area; the tract on the earth's surface within which an earthquake is felt.

se'iz-mi-cāl, *a.* same as *seismic*.

se'iz-mism, *n.* [Gr. *seismos*, an earthquake.] the phenomena of earthquakes, collectively.

se'iz-mō, [from Gr. *seismos*, earthquake, from *seiein*, to shake.] a combining form meaning earthquake, as in *seismogram*; also, rarely, *sismo*.

se'iz-mō-gram, *n.* [seismo- and -gram.] the record of an earthquake as made by a seismograph.

se'iz-mō-graph, *n.* [seismo- and -graph.] an instrument for registering the direction, intensity, and time of earthquakes.

se'iz-mō-graph'ic, *a.* 1. pertaining to seismography.

2. indicated or recorded by a seismograph.

se'iz-mō-graph'ic, *n.* the study or observation of the phenomena of earthquakes; the science of recording such phenomena by means of the seismograph.

se'iz-mō-log'ic-āl, **se'iz-mō-log'ic**, *a.* relating to seismology.

se'iz-mō-log'ic-āl-ly, *adv.* by means of or according to seismology.

se'iz-mō-lō-gy, *n.* [seismo- and -logy.] the science of earthquakes; that department of science which treats of earthquakes and all phenomena connected with them.

se'iz-mō-mē-tēr, *n.* [seismo- and -meter.] same as *seismograph*.

se'iz-mō-mē-tric, *a.* same as *seismographic*.

se'iz-mō-mē-try, *n.* the use of a seismometer in measuring and recording the phenomena of earthquakes.

se'iz-mō-scope, *n.* [Gr. *seismos*, an earthquake, and *skopein*, to see.] an instrument which indicates only the occurrence and time of earthquakes.

se'iz-mō-scop'ic, *a.* of or recorded by a seismoscope.

se'iz-mō-tic, *a.* same as *seismic*.

se'iz-ty, *n.* [L. *se*, oneself.] something peculiar to one's self; individuality.

se'iz-ā-ble, *a.* that can be seized.

se'ize, *v.t.*; *seized*, *pt.*, *pp.*; *seizing*, *ppr.* [ME. *saysen*, *seysen*, OFr. *saisir*, *seisir*, to take possession of, from LL. *sacire*.]

1. originally, to put in legal possession of a feudal holding.
2. to take legal possession of.
3. to take possession of suddenly and by force.
4. to have a sudden and drastic effect upon; to attack; to strike; as, his mind was *seized* with a sudden paralysis.
5. to capture; to take prisoner; to catch; to arrest.
6. to grasp suddenly with the hand; to take hold of forcibly.
7. to grasp with the mind; to comprehend; to understand.
8. to take advantage of (an opportunity, etc.) quickly.
9. in nautical usage, to fasten together (ropes, etc.), as by lashings; to bind; to lash.

to seize on (or upon); (a) to take hold of suddenly and with force; (b) to take possession of.

Syn.—grasp, catch, apprehend, take.

se'iz-ēr, *n.* one who or that which seizes.

se'iz-in, **se'iz-in**, *n.* [Fr. *saisine*, from *saisir*, to seize.]

1. in law, possession; specifically, possession of a freehold estate. Seizin in fact or deed is actual or corporal possession; seizin in law is constructive possession, as where there is no adverse claimant.
2. the act of taking possession.
3. the thing possessed; property so possessed.

livery of seizin; see under *livery*.

se'iz-ing, *n.* 1. seizure.

2. in nautical usage, (a) the act of binding or fastening together, as with lashings; (b) lashings or cordage used for this; (c) a fastening made in this way.

se'iz-ōr, *n.* in law, one who seizes or takes possession of a freehold estate.

se'iz-ūre (-zhur), *n.* 1. the act of seizing; the act of laying hold on suddenly; as, the *seizure* of a thief.

2. the act of taking possession by force; as, the *seizure* of lands or goods; the *seizure* of a town by an enemy; the *seizure* of a throne by a usurper.
3. the act of taking by warrant; as, the *seizure* of contraband goods.
4. a sudden attack, as of a disease.
5. the thing taken or seized. [Obs.]
6. ownership; grasp; possession. [Obs.]

se'iz-ant, **se'iz-ant**, *a.* [Fr. *seant*; ppr. of *seoir*, from *L. sedere*, to sit.] in heraldry, sitting with the forelegs straight and upright; applied to a lion, etc.

se'iz-ant fronté; sitting with the entire body facing the observer.

Sejm (sām), *n.* [Pol., assembly.] 1. formerly, the lower chamber of the Polish Parliament.



LION SEJANT

2. the Polish Parliament, now only one chamber.

se-join', *v.t.* to separate. [Rare.]

se-jū-gous, *a.* [L. *sejagus*, see *yoke*.] in botany, having six panicles. [Obs.]

se-junc-tion, *n.* the act of disjunction. [Obs.]

se'ke, *a.* sick. [Obs.]

se'ke, *v.t.* and *v.i.* to seek. [Obs.]

Sekh'et (sek't), *n.* [Egypt.] an Egyptian deity portrayed as having the head of a lioness.

se'kōs, *n.* [Gr. a pen, enclosure.] Greece, a shrine or sacred enclosure.

sel, *n.* self. [Scot. and Brit. Dial.]

se-lā'chī-ān, *a.* of or belonging to the Selā'chī-ān, *n.* a member of the Selā'chī-ān, *n.* [Gr. *selachos*, shark.] of fishes including the sharks; rays: now sometimes restricted to the fishes of this order containing the sharks.

sel-ā'choid, *a.* like a shark.

Sel-ā'choidē-ī, *n.* a group of fishes including the sharks as contrasted with the selachians.

sel-ā'choid-ē-ist, *n.* one who makes a selachians.

Sel-ā'chos'tō-mī, *n.* [Gr. *selachos* and *stoma*, mouth.] an order of fishes including the paddlefish.

Sel-ā'gī-nel-lā, *n.* [dim. of *Selago*.] the typical genus of the *Selagin* consisting of evergreen herbs of mossy appearance, resembling *Lycopodium*.

1. originally, to put in legal possession of a feudal holding.
2. [s-] a member of this genus.

Sel-ā'gī-nel-lā'cē-ae, *n.* [dim. of *Selago*.] of cryptogamous plants.

Sē-lā'gō, *n.* [L.] a South African genus of shrubs having narrow leaves and flowers in slender spikes.

se'lāh, *n.* [Heb., meaning not known.] connected with *sālāh*, rest; in the Hebrew word found frequently in the Bible: a verse: its meaning is unknown, but often interpreted as an indication of a pause or rest.

se-lām'lik, *n.* [Turk. *selamlık*, from *selam* and Turk. suffix -*lik*.]

1. that part of a Turkish house set apart for men, in which guests are received.
2. formerly, the ceremonial visit of the Turkish sultan to a mosque every Friday.

sel'couth, *a.* rare; unusual; uncommon.

seld, *a.* unusual; rare. [Obs.]

seld, *adv.* rarely; seldom. [Obs.]

sel'den, *adv.* seldom; rarely. [Obs.]

sel'dōm, *adv.* [AS. *seldan*, *seldon*, *seldan*.] rarely; not often; not frequently.

sel'dōm, *a.* rare; infrequent. [Obs.]

sel'dō-ness, *n.* rareness. [Rare.]

seld'seen, *a.* rarely seen. [Obs.]

se-lect', *a.* [L. *selectus*, pp. of *selektō*, to choose from *se-*, apart, and *legere*, to choose.]

1. chosen in preference to another or others; picked out, especially for excellence or special quality; picked.
2. choice; excellent; outstanding.
3. careful in choosing or selecting; fastidious.

4. exclusive; as, a *select* company of officers.

se-lect', *v.t.*; *selected*, *pt.*, *pp.*; *selecting*, *ppr.* to choose and take from a number; to pick out, as for excellence, desirability, etc.

se-lect', *v.i.* to make a selection; to choose.

se-lect'ed-ly, *adv.* with selection.

se-lect-ee, *n.* a person inducted into the armed forces under selective service.

se-lection, *n.* 1. a selecting, or being selected; that or those selected.

2. in biology, any process, whether natural or artificial, by which certain organisms or characteristics are permitted or favored to survive and reproduce in, or as if in, preference to others.

se-lect'ive, *a.* 1. of, having to do with, or characterized by selection.

2. having the power of selecting; tending to select.
3. in radio, excluding oscillations on all frequencies except the one desired.

selective absorption; that absorption manifested by a substance when it is impervious to certain rays of heat or light.

selective service; compulsory military training and service according to age, physical fitness, ability, etc.